

Theological theses about reprobation—its nature, object, cause, and effects. In which is expounded the doctrine of those who among the Protestants are called with the single name Reformed, and compared with the doctrine of the Roman school.

1. More than a few Reformed theologians seem to include under the decree of reprobation anything that God eternally decreed and ordained with regard to those who are excluded from salvation, and are assigned the penalties of hell. They even assign to the decree of reprobation an act of the divine will by which God determined to create reprobates and to permit any of their sins. And they think that God, with that intention, created the reprobates and permitted their sins, even that first sin by which they are born corrupted in order that he might show himself to be an avenger of their sins in their just punishment.

2. Given that there are those who understand predestination in some general sense, as embracing election and reprobation under the term as if there were two species, they define it thus: “Predestination is, the eternal, most righteous and unchangeable counsel of God concerning the creation of man, the permission of man to fall into sin and eternal death, the sending of his Son in the flesh that he might be a sacrifice, and the salvation of some by true faith and conversion through the Holy Spirit and the Word for the sake of the mediator, by, and on account of whom they are justified, raised to glory, and granted eternal life; while the rest are left in sin and death, raised to judgement, and cast into everlasting punishment.” This is the

description of predestination by Ursinus in his explication of the Catechism, part 2, the chapter about predestination, q.2.

3. The definition of Zanchi is consistent [with the above], which he imagines with these words. “Predestination is an eternal and immutable decree of God by which he established with himself eternally to: first, create all people, then, to permit that they fall into sins and rush to death. Then, of those people, some he decreed to graciously give his grace in Christ and then eternal life, but for the others he did not deign this grace, but instead to blind and harden them with Satan and then to destroy them by eternal destruction. And he did this so that among the former he might declare his divine goodness and mercy, but among the latter his divine power and justice, and this, in all things God is glorified.” Tome 7, tract on predestination, num 9 [col. 188].

4. The description of Bucanus is also like the others. “The decree of predestination is that by which God, in the creation of men for himself, before he created them, deciding to what end he would create them, decreed according to his power and will thus to serve his own glory that there should be vessels and examples of his own goodness and mercy, but others as vessels of his wrath, that is, of his justice in revenging sin and of his power.” Loco 36, q. 8.

5. This also is the same position of Beza, who in his brief explanation of the whole of Christianity, established that the decree of predestination is

that in which God decreed to create men, like everything else, for his own glory, but in two completely different ways. So, namely, some, whom it seemed [good?] to himself by his own hidden will, he made participants of his own glory through his mercy, but in others whom he similarly was pleased to make use of, he showed his own power and wrath in order that he also would be glorified among them. Ch. 2 on predestination. Aph. 2. And in chapter 5, the first aphorism, he repeats that our Lord thus created reprobates in order that he might be glorified in their just condemnation.

6. Moreover, Gomarus, Piscator, Twisse, and Voetius come to the same belief; and thus, whoever among the Reformed are called supralapsarians that hold and teach this, on account of which, whenever they assign an object of predestination, they ascend above the fall of man [*supra lapsum hominis*].

7. Still, a great part of the doctors of the Reformed church do not think that the decree of creating man and permitting the fall of the first man, and thus, from that, the consequent ruin of all of humankind, makes up a part of reprobation. For they limit the decree of reprobation to that will by which God established to not elect certain people but to leave them in their own sins and finally, on account of those sins, justly damn them.

8. This was the opinion of the Synod of Dordt, whose chapter about divine predestination, Art. 15, lays down the decree of reprobation as, “God, out of his most free, most just, and unchangeable good pleasure, has

decreed to leave certain people in the common misery into which they have willfully plunged themselves, and not to bestow upon them saving faith and conversion; but leaving them in his just judgment to follow their own ways, at last for the declaration of his justice, to condemn and punish them forever, not only on account of their unbelief, but also for all their other sins.”

9. To this definition agree many individual *Judicia* of the theologians who attended that Synod. So, in the *Judicium* of the Nassau theologians, this is their first thesis about reprobation: The will of God through which he eternally wisely, freely, and immutably established to not choose some certain people from the whole human race in sin and misery, and to justly damn them on account of their sins—this is the whole decree of reprobation. And this was also the same position of the Leiden theologians as can be seen in Rivet’s theses about reprobation, thesis 3.

10. Additionally, these theologians are accustomed to distinguish in reprobation a twofold act. They call one “negative,” by which God eternally decree to not elect a person, but to pass over and to not raise from the fall. But the other called “positive” or “affirmative,” is that by which God decreed those sinners left to themselves and abusing the administration of common providence where they are not abandoned, after a long toleration, to assign them to their merited punishments and to afflict them with those same punishments. These are the words of Rivet in the same disputation, thesis 7.

11. Polyander agrees in his theses on reprobation, edited in the year 1625, thesis 19. There he observes two distinct preordinations in reprobation. He says, “The first is negative, which is designated by the words preterition and non-election; the other is affirmative, which is designated by the term predamnation.”

12. But if it is asked in which of those two preordinations does reprobation chiefly consist, the views of the doctors seem to vary at this point. And indeed, Polyander seems especially to position reprobation in this latter preordination. For when he defines reprobation, he expressly mentions only it, thesis 18. “Reprobation,” he says, “is the predestination of certain people, fallen in their sins, and bound in their unrighteousness through various means and levels of rejecting the truth of God or the preaching of the gospel to themselves to the destruction of eternal death.”

13. Even the older doctors of the Reformed school seemed to chiefly place the emphasis [*rationem*] of reprobation in the predestination of certain men on the destruction and eternal death, as is clear from their definitions. But the Synod of Dordt on reprobation especially treats of the decree of denying certain people grace by which their hearts might be softened and turned to faith and repentance. This is seen in their chapter on predestination, art. 6. “That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree, according to which decree, he graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines

them to believe, while he leaves the non-elect in his just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. And herein is especially displayed the profound, and merciful, and at the same time the righteous discrimination between men, equally involved in ruin; or that decree of election and reprobation, revealed in the Word of God.”

14. Similarly, Rivet in his disputation about reprobation, in his disputation on predestination, which [citation], properly grounds reprobation in that negative act, by which God eternally did not choose, but passed over certain people. For these are his words in thesis 8. “These things being premised, we say that to that negative act, namely preterition, which is properly reprobation, insofar as it is the other side of election, there is need of no cause, which ought to be antecedent,” for God to move one to be reprobated.

15. In fact, the theologians of Great Britain in their *judicium* which they gave at the Synod of Dordt place the whole reason [*rationem*] of reprobation in that negative act by which God established not to grant to certain people that grace by which the elect would be effectively led to faith and salvation. For this is how they speak in their second chapter of their *judicium* on predestination, the first orthodox thesis: “Reprobation properly called, or not-electing, is the eternal decree of God, by which out of his most free will he has decreed, not so far to take pity of some persons fallen in Adam, as to rescue them effectually, through Christ, out of the state of misery, and without fail to bring them to bliss.” Afterwards they add, by their *judicium*,

that reprobation insofar as it is opposite to election, does not imply or denote any other proper action except the negation of that same glory and of that same grace, which God prepared in election for his own sons.

16. But the Professors at Saumur seem to restrict reprobation to a sole negation of saving grace. For they openly distinguish the decree of reprobation from the decree of damnation. And they define temporal reprobation by the exclusion from saving grace, of which the eternal decree is reprobation—about which we now investigate. Thus, in their first disputation about election and reprobation, thesis 36 has: “Damnation itself is one thing, reprobation another; and the decree of damnation is likewise one thing, and the decree of reprobation another, and the cause of both decrees. Damnation is the most-just infliction itself for the justly deserved punishment. Reprobation is the exclusion, or a denial of the saving grace by which a person believes and is truly led to penitence.” This is consistent with what Paul Testard teaches in his *Synopsis* of doctrine about nature and grace, thesis 294. “Reprobation,” he says, “is a decree of hardening, that is, of surrendering to the reprobate mind, according to a just judgment by withholding the grace of effectual calling. But less properly, with a wider meaning, besides that decree, there is a decree to condemn and afflict with punishments, both temporal ones with a malediction, and eternal ones.”

17. Again, just as many Reformed theologians define reprobation variously, and more or less of them understand it as an act of divine

providence, so they also variously assign to it effects, or indeed as they want to say, its consequences, and the means by which it is ordered to its execution. And, since those who define reprobation so loosely that it covers the decree of creating man and the permission of the fall of human kind, each want God to have created some certain people for that end that he might show and highlight the glory of his justice in their just condemnation, they, I say, must necessarily number among the effect or means of reprobation the creation of the reprobates, and the permission of every sin which is the cause or occasion of perdition itself. So, according to Zachary Ursinus, the effects of reprobation are: 1. The creation of the reprobates. 2. The privation or desertion of divine grace. By which language he seems to understand the permission of every sin. *Institution of the Catechism* part 2. on predestination. q. 4.

18. This is the same position which Zanchi has in his *Summa Praelectionum*, 7th book, tract on predestination, 22. “To be created,” he says, “to be permitted to fall into sin and death, are effects of predestination common to the elect and reprobate. But to be left in sins perpetually, to be blind, to be hardened, and finally to be damned, are the proper effects of the reprobation of the impious.” Also, William Perkins teaches that the creation of man and the permission of the fall is a common means of the predestination of man, both to life as well as to death. But he understands permission as that by which God justly permitted the defection of Adam and his posterity, by not impeding it when he was able. This can be seen in his little book on predestination, right near the beginning. Polanus agrees



with this in his Syntagma, book 4, ch. 10, thes. 3. where he teaches that the effects of reprobation are the causing or creation of the reprobates in order that God might show his own power and justice in them; then, the permission of the fall or sin in which the reprobates died.

19. Similarly, Bucanus, in Locus 36 question 38 places among the common means of reprobation the creation of man in integrity and righteousness, then the fall of man and their corruption. And in question 39, among the specific means of the execution of the decree of reprobating, he assigns to men the infinite offspring of actual sins. Which [sins], if they are the means of reprobation, their permission is an effect of reprobation.

20. But although he and other Reformed theologians number the various sins of the reprobates among the means or consequences of reprobation—indeed even the fall itself of the first man— they nevertheless do not want any sin to be called an effect of reprobation, and they teach that God indeed wished to permit them, but not to actually effect them. This can be seen in Ursinus and Bucanus in the places cited above, especially with Polanus in the 14th book, where dealing with the effects of reprobation, he proves by many arguments that sin is not an effect of eternal reprobation. Nor does he want sins to be the means *per se* in service of the end of predestination or reprobation, but only accidentally, and from the ordination of God eliciting a good from bad. This can be seen with Perkins in the place already cited.

21. Nevertheless, at this point, some theologians distinguish among sins, as they are sins, and among those same sins, as when they are the punishments of other sins. And indeed, they deny that sins, simply as they are sins, are effects of reprobation. But they insist that certain sins in the reprobate both are and are rightly called the effects of reprobation, insofar as they are punishments of preceding sins. This is the condition of those who have been delivered over to a reprobate mind, a blindness of the mind, and a hardness of heart. Which clearly, as it is a penalty of preceding sin, it ought to be understood as a cause of reprobation. Although in itself [*per se*] and under the notion of sin [*sub ratione peccati*], it is not properly called an effect of reprobation.

22. This is the position of Zachary Ursinus in the already cited place where also, what is harsher, he clearly and expressly places perseverance in sins as being among the effects of reprobation. Nevertheless, this is neither proved by others nor ought it be. If indeed perseverance in one's sins is itself the greatest of sin, then it is not able to be assigned to God's decree as a cause, without God, as a consequence, being made the author of sin.

23. No, it seems that it should not even be said that sin, as it is a penalty, is from reprobation, and inflicted by God, as Ursinus speaks. For sin is never a penalty, properly speaking, inflicted by God, but when God leaves a sinner under the punishment of some sin, and leaves him to himself, whence it happens that he becomes more wicked, and falls into greater guilt, that which has the nature of a penalty is that desertion and abandoning of God;

But then the expression “that sins are punished with sins” is an improper expression.

24. But whether reprobates are able to be said to have been preordained and destined to sin by the decree of God, it is an open question among the doctors of the Reformed school. To this, Zanchi responds that indeed no one was predestined to commit a sin, insofar as it is a sin, “but nevertheless both elect and reprobate were preordained to sin, even as it is sin, insofar as by it the glory of God ought to be magnified and is magnified.” These words come from his sixth thesis on reprobation, second question, found in the second chapter of the fifth book about the nature of God.

25. But this is said harshly and with some offense to pious ears, and it is simply false that anyone was predestined or preordained by God to sin, as it is sin, no matter what restriction is afterwards added; although both elect and reprobate are predestined that they would be allowed to happen upon and fall into various sins, and that God also had preordained to magnify his own glory from their sins which he himself permitted.

26. Others at this point distinguish between the effective and approbative decree and between the moderating or permissive decree, and indeed they deny that the sins of the reprobate arise from this effective and approbative decree. But they insist to truly and justly attribute those sins to the decree of God which they call moderating and permissive. Therefore, according to

them, men are able to be said to be preordained to sin by a permissive decree, but not by God's effective one. This is the doctrine and distinction of Bucanus in loc. 36. q. 40. to which the teaching of Perkins has an affinity, in his book on predestination, response to the third accusation. But to others (and more rightly), it seems that the harshness of such speaking ought to be avoided.

27. But putting this aside, seeing that many of the Reformed theologians think that the whole decree of reprobation includes no other acts of the divine will than that by which God established certain people to remain in the mass of sin, and finally, on account of their sins, to justly damn them, from their position it follows that the permission of the first sin of man, and, from that, the consequences of original sin, ought not to be attached to reprobation as its effect, but should pertain only to common providence.

28. And it is much more necessary that they assert the same about creation, which in their mind, does not depend upon reprobation, as a cause. But instead, it depends upon a certain decree of common providence which according to our mode of conceiving these things, comes before the decree of reprobation and is presupposed by it.

29. Moreover, the permission of their sins, which follows upon original sin in the reprobate and the negation of the grace which is conferred upon the elect, and finally eternal death, which is repaid for the sins of the reprobate by the just judgment of God, they acknowledge and enumerate as

the proper consequent effects of reprobation. This can be seen in Rivet's theses on reprobation.

30. Nevertheless, on this point, Pierre du Moulin turns away from the common position; for he simply denies that permission of sin is an effect of reprobation. And he rejects the definition of Thomas who says that the decree of reprobation is a will to permit someone to fall into guilt and to inflict the penalty of damnation for that guilt. "For," he says, "the permission by which God permits a sin does not pertain to predestination but to providence no matter how much it might serve predestination." In *Anatomy of Arminianism*, ch. 26.

31. But what do those who restrict the decree of reprobation to only the will to deny to some men effective and salvific grace by which the elect are given true faith and penitence do? As I already said, the Saumur professors and Testard in the *Irenicum*, they, I say, do not think that damnation is a proper and immediate effect of reprobation, but only a negation of that efficacious grace which works faith and repentance in the elect.

32. But just as Reformed theologians variously define reprobation, and they include more or less decrees of God under the word "reprobation," nor do they assign to it its effects in the same way, so also, they give various views about its object. For those who think to make the decree about the creating of man and the permission of his fall a part of reprobation as

Polanus, Beza, Zanchi, Gormarus, Ursinus, Bucanus, Twisse, and others, they want the object of reprobation to be considered, according to all of his acts, to be not fallen and created man, but simply man as creatable. This position was strongly defended a few years ago by Voetius, professor at Utrecht.

33. But some teach that the object of predestination, taken generally, and therefore of reprobation, is man—indeed considered as created—but as not yet fallen into sin. This is the position of Franciscus Junius in his *Amica Collatione* with Jacob Arminius on predestination.

34. But according to the view of the Synod of Dordt, and many teachers today in the Reformed school, the object of reprobation is not man simply as created and founded by the foresight in God, but whom God considers as fallen in Adam and infected with original sin. For in their description of the decree of reprobation, they do not ascend above the fall.

35. But according to Sohnius, once professor at Heidelberg, the object of reprobation as well as election is not man simply fallen in Adam and corrupted by sin, but also as called by God, both to faith and repentance, either called and invited through the word or through the works of nature and providence. This can be seen in his tract on eternal predestination.

36. But the Bremen Theologians in their *Judicium* offered at the Synod of Dordt and the Saumurians in their theses and others who agree with them

in their doctrine of universal grace seem to agree in this point. For they think that God, before he decreed to place any distinction between people by election and reprobation, established to provide commonly Christ to be the redeemer for all, and to call and invite all by various steps and ways to the participation in that grace. And then finally, when he saw that all, if they were left to themselves, would be impenitent and unbelieving, decreed to overcome their hardness and obstinacy by his grace, but to harden others, by not granting that same grace to the latter, and permitting them to resist the invitation and calling of God, and not to yield to him.

37. Now with regard to the cause of reprobation, that is, the question of whether a cause is given on the part of man or some condition from whose prevision God was moved or induced to reprobate this or that person or by what [cause or condition] this or that person who has been eternally reprobated is deserving of it, Reformed theologians likewise go off into different positions. Indeed, every theologian who describes reprobation so broadly that it covers the eternal counsel of God about the creation of the reprobates and his permitting of each of their falls establishes that the object of reprobation is man, not created and fallen in the divine prevision, but simply man creatable; and they number creation and the permission of the fall of the first man among the common means of reprobation; they, I say, constantly and unanimously affirm of every reprobate and all of his actions and effects taken collectively and as a whole, that there is given no reason or cause on the part of man from whose prevision God was impelled to reprobate this or that person, and by which [cause] this or that person is

deserving of it by his own merit on which the whole effect of reprobation falls. And thus, not only do they insist that the reason why this person rather than that person was reprobated depends upon the sole good-pleasure of God, but also that God in reprobating foresaw nothing more in the reprobates why those who were to be reprobated by God were deserving of it than what he foresaw in the elect by which they deserved to be chosen by God and predestined to life. Whence it follows that the entire and complete decree of reprobation in whatever mode it is finally considered, whether comparatively or absolutely, ought to be referred to the sole and mere will of God; nor can there be sought or given any reason for it from the future sins of men.

38. Nevertheless, if anyone considers the effects of reprobation distinctly or separately, they acknowledge that some of those effects have a reason [*meritum*] in man and are rightly derived from them by the sins of the reprobates. As, for example, the eternal penalty of damnation, which is the chief effect of reprobation according to the view of all theologians, is inflicted upon no reprobate except for his sins and his evil demerits. And they believe the same about the hardening and blinding, and that desertion by which the impious are handed over to their reprobate understanding, all of which are the most righteous penalty by which God is accustomed to vindicate the contempt of his grace.

39. But if anyone is pleased to divide the decree of reprobation into various acts and partial decrees, and to consider that act of the divine will



on its own, by which the reprobate are destined and ordered to death, the theologians already named who, from the fact that when they assign the object of reprobation they ascend above the fall [*supra lapsum*] of man, are called supralapsarians, do not seem to altogether agree, but wander towards different positions. For many of them insist that God eternally destined certain people with the sufferings of eternal hell before the foresight of any future faults in them. And hence the decree of damning these or those people has no reason or cause on the part of man. Indeed, that decree ought to be conceived as something prior to the decree of permitting the sins of the reprobates, which latter decree follows the prevision of sins in which the reprobate fall by God's permission.

40. This is the express position of Polanus in his *Syntagma Theologiae* book 4 ch. 10, "Concerning the efficient cause of eternal reprobation" where this is his second thesis: "The efficient impelling cause on account of which the decree of reprobation was made, whether affirmative or negative reprobation, is not sin to which also pertains the evil use of free choice." But the third thesis denies the eternal prevision of sin to be a cause of the decree of reprobation. And this is because, according to his view (in the same chapter where he explains the nature of reprobation), God in the decree of reprobation first ordained creatures to their end, namely, either to eternal life or eternal death, then, finally, did he subordinate the means to execute his counsel; among which means are the sins of the reprobates.

41. Jerome Zanchi also teaches the same thing in the fifth book on the nature of God, the second chapter. There, he refutes those who admit that indeed the mere will of God, and not the foreseen sins of men, is the cause of negative reprobation, which is that decree by which God established to not be merciful to certain folk, and to deny them his grace. But of affirmative reprobation, that is, of that decree by which God established to punish certain people eternally, they [i.e., those Z. refutes] contend that the sins of the impious are a cause, and not just the will of God. Zanchi says that they are deceived regarding the primary cause—why God destined certain people to eternal death—which they make to be their foreseen evil works and deny it to be the sole will of God. Because sins, according to Zanchi, are indeed the cause of damnation among the impious, but not the cause of the divine decree for them to be damned and punished, which in God, according to him, precedes the prevision of all sins, and thus the decree to permit the fall of humankind. According to him, just as the decree about the means is subordinate to the first decree, so it is subordinate to the decree about the end. He says, “The first thing God eternally decreed about the reprobate was the destination of certain men to everlasting destruction. For this purpose, their sins were ordained, as well as the act of leaving them to their sins and the refusal of grace.”

42. Beza also agrees with these things in his brief exposition of the whole of Christianity, second chapter, the 5th aphorism where he says, when treating about reprobation to destruction, that although all guilt remains with them [i.e., the reprobate], nevertheless the Spirit of God bears us up to

that high mystery that it [i.e., reprobation] precedes in rank all causes of their damnation, about which mystery there is no other cause known to men except the just will of God himself. And Piscator also follows Beza, which from either theologian it is clear that the decree to permit the fall of man is made long after the decree to damn reprobates, and many other decrees come in between, as Twisse notes in his vindication of Perkins, first digression, about the object of predestination.

43. Additionally, Twisse, although he reprehends Piscator and others on this point—that they establish the decree to damn some people to be rationally prior to the prevision of sin—still, at the same time, also denies that such prevision in God is prior to the decree of damnation. For he teaches that the decree to damn some and the decree to permit their sins and the prevision itself of their sins are naturally and rationally in God simultaneously, and they are coordinate things, not subordinates. And so, still, he agrees with them in that foreseen sins are not a cause or reason in any way why God added a certain decree of everlasting damnation.

44. But Perkins, although he otherwise affirms with those doctors who are called supralapsarians, that the whole decree of reprobation precedes in God every consideration of sin in reprobated men, and thus that there is no reason or motive able to be assigned on the part of man [for that decree], but that it should be referred to sole will of God; he still thinks that that act of the divine will, by which certain people are ordained to punishment has

in God a certain prevision and consideration of sin. For he teaches that there is a twofold act of the decree of reprobation. First, according to him, is the decree of deserting certain men, and of proclaiming his justice among them. Concerning this act, he affirms that outside of God, one is not able to give an impulsive cause, because, as he thinks, it arises from the mere good-pleasure of God, having no respect to either good or bad in creatures. He says that the second act of reprobation is an ordination to punishment or a lawful death. But he again distinguishes this ordination, according to the various ways of thinking, into simple and comparative [ordination]. Simple ordination for him is an ordination by which that person (think Judas or Cain) is ordained to punishment. And this, he says, is brought about by God with respect to original or actual sins, and that such sin in the divine foreknowledge rationally precedes [that ordination], although he denies that it follows from this that sin is a cause of the decree of damnation. But he says that comparative ordination is that by which one, rather than another, both in an equal condition, is ordained to punishment. And he asserts of this comparative reprobation that its cause is the mere will of God, even without respect to any sin.

45. He seems to err in this point. If indeed, to the extent that he himself assumed, that just as God damned men on account of sin, so he decreed to damn them on account of sin, so we are able to assume that just as God damns this one rather than that one because this one rather than that one died in his sins, so also, he decreed to damn this one rather than that one because he foresaw this one rather than that one would die in his sin.

46. What pertains to those to whom the object of reprobation is fallen man, corrupted in sin, is that all agree that God sentenced no one to be damned by his own eternal decree except on account of his foreseen sin, and on account of his future sin. Indeed, from that doctrine it clearly follows that the whole preceding decree of reprobation in God has some consideration of future sins hereafter in reprobated man.

47. Nevertheless, regarding the question of whether the decree of reprobation has some cause in man which urged God to reprobate this or that person, the great majority of them respond with the following distinction. Namely, as was already observed, they distinguish two acts in the decree of reprobation. One is negative, by which God decreed to pass over certain men in the communication of saving grace and eternal glory (which he destined to the elect). But the other is positive, by which he determined to judge them to the eternal punishments of hell. And they deny that there can be found a cause in the merits of man for that first act, but instead they assert that it ought to be assigned to the sole will of God. But concerning the second, positive and affirmative act, by which certain men are destined to eternal damnation, they admit that a cause ought not to be assigned to the sole will of God, but to the foreseen sins of those who are foreseen to have earned that punishment. Nearly all of the theologians who were at the Synod of Dordt unanimously taught this doctrine. This can be seen in their *Judicia* which are found subjoined to the Canons in the Acts of that Synod.

48. But others add another distinction explained above by us. For if reprobation is considered comparatively, and one asks, for example, why Judas rather than Peter was reprobated, then they deny that the sins and demeriting bad actions of men to be its cause. This is true whether one has in mind that first negative act which is called non-election or preterition, or even that latter positive act, which they call predamnation. For although God had foreseen in Judas the merit of damnation before he ordained him to damnation by that decree, he foresaw in many elect as well sins which would suffice for their damnation, unless he decreed to use his mercy towards them.

49. But if reprobation is considered absolutely, and the question is whether this or that person had merited that God reprobate him, then they answer that the foreseen sins of the reprobate were a sufficient cause on account of which God justly could reprobate and reject them, and that, not only with respect to the second act which is predamnation, but also with respect to the former act, which is preterition or the denial of grace, although they affirm this point less expressly and openly than about the second act. This is the teaching of Rivet in his disputation about predestination. For he says this in his 13th thesis: "It is one thing to ask about the cause of why reprobates are worthy of damnation, but it is another thing to ask why God reprobated this person rather than another. The answer to the first is found and established in sin, but the latter question is answered in the sole hidden will of God."

50. But Louis Cappel, in the first part of his theses on election and reprobation which were inserted in the second volume of the Saumurian theses, actually denies that the decree of non-electing or of passing over some people in the communication of saving and effectual grace has a cause on the part of man, if the elect and reprobate are compared among themselves. Although if this preterition is considered absolutely, they who have been reprobated have merited their reprobation by their sin, and were considered as such by God, when he established that decree of reprobation.

51. But when he focuses on the decree about damning certain people, in whatever way it is eventually considered, he affirms that its cause and merit is in the sins of men. Namely, their foreseen sins were not only the cause why they have been condemned to eternal damnation by the decree of God, but why this one and not that one. For he does not want any person to have been preordained to eternal damnation except on account of foreseen final impenitence and unbelief. This can be seen in his 36th thesis. But in the following thesis these are his words: “The cause of reprobation, if it is considered in itself and absolutely, is sin, that is, a person, insofar as he is a sinner, deserves to be reprobated by God, whether he has deserved to be one to whom God might deny, if he wishes, his own grace and the gift of faith, or is unworthy to whom God might confer such a benefit. But God reprobates or excludes from grace no person unless he has considered and eternally foreseen him/her as corrupted and ruined by sin.” Yet, thesis 38:

“But there is no other cause of reprobation comparatively considered than the mere good-pleasure of God.”

52. But regarding those theologians who teach that reprobation, at least absolutely considered, has a cause, motive, or reason in the foreseen sin of men, many of them do not explain what sin they have in mind—whether only original, or also actual, and whether only final impenitence or also other sins. Nevertheless, the most celebrated du Moulin in his *Anatomy of Arminianism* ch. 26, after he had asserted in numbers 6 and 7 that sin is the meritorious cause of reprobation, yet is not the discriminating cause among the elect and reprobates, asserts in the following paragraph that men are not merely reprobated on account of the sin contracted from Adam, and on account of the fall, which things are common to both the reprobate and elect, but also on account of actual sins, which have been committed during the course of one’s whole life.

53. But we should state not what perhaps each person might believe, but what doctrine follows from each person, and what is necessary to be believed by each person, if one wishes to stand on proper principles, given that, according to the greatest part of the Reformed doctors, and especially of those to whom the Synod of Dordt is worth something, the object of reprobation in its totality and insofar as all of its acts are considered, is human kind as fallen in Adam, and infected by original sin, but not men as already contaminated with actual sins and vices; they necessarily have to say that as far as its first act, which is preterition or non-election, it has no



preceding consideration of any sin, except original, and thus if they say that there is some merit or dignity in man regarding preterition and non-election absolutely considered, they ought then to refer that whole thing to original sin.

54. But indeed, if reprobation is considered as the second act, which is predamnation, and a certain ordination to eternal death, given that they say that someone is damned on account of those same foreseen sins on account of which a person was from eternity, by the decree of God, ordained and destined to damnation, then it is clear that men are damned not on account of original sin alone, but on account of whatever actual sins are committed in the whole course of one's life—indeed no one is damned unless he perseveres in his sins unto the very end in death. From this it follows that according to their position, reprobation, as it considers the former act and as it conceives that latter act, as a preordination of certain men to eternal death and everlasting punishments, was not made except on account of foreseen perseverance in final sin, and thus on account of that and with respect to it.

55. Whence it is able to be clearly and openly concluded that final perseverance in sin is a cause and reason of reprobation, according to its final act, not only when reprobation is considered absolutely, but also when it is comparatively considered. For God does not simply damn this or that person because he died in sin, but also when it is asked why God assigned this person rather than that person to eternal death, one is able to rightly and truly respond that God does this because this one died in sin, but that

one was restored from sin before death. And in the same way those doctors about whom we now treat conclude that as God damns men on account of sin in which they persevere to death, so also, he decreed to damn them on account of the same sin, so they also ought to conclude that as God damns this one instead of that one, because this one finished his life in sin rather than that one, so also, he decreed to damn this one rather than that one because he foresaw this one would finish his life in sin rather than that one.

56. But those who want the object of election and reprobation to be men called to participate in the grace of Christ or through the express and explicit preaching of the Gospel or in some other way, they are able to admit not only original sin, but also actual sins, and vices contracted voluntarily by a person, to be the cause of reprobation, not only regarding the second act which is predamnation, but also according to the first act which is preterition, at least when reprobation is absolutely considered. For if God in electing and reprobating men considered them as resisting the divine call, as far as it is in their hands and if they are left to themselves, he without a doubt sees those whom he rejects worthy of it, not only with respect to original sin in which they are conceived and born, but also with respect to actual sins in which they voluntarily pollute and contaminate themselves. Though, he sees nothing worthy in them why he should convert this person rather than that one or leave this one in his native depravity and stubbornness rather than that one.

57. From these things it is indeed concluded that the more common and justifiable view about the cause of reprobation in the Reformed schools is that view which says that reprobation, taken as that act which is preterition or non-election, indeed has some merit or reason on the part of reprobated man, if reprobation is looked at absolutely or in itself. But it does not have one, if looked at comparatively. But if that other act which is predamnation or destination to death is being treated of, then perseverance of man in sin is the cause and merit of it, in whatever way it is considered.